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Do We Have What It Takes to Reinvent the U.S. Food System?

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Colloquium: Local Food || Global Food: Do We Have What It Takes to Reinvent the U.S. Food System?

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COLLOQUIUM: LOCAL FOOD || GLOBAL FOOD:
DO WE HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO REINVENT THE
U.S. FOOD SYSTEM?

INTRODUCTION

On February 23, 2013, the staff and board of the Maine Law Review organized a colloquium in Portland, Maine, focused on the future of the food system in the United States.¹ The event brought together more than a dozen legal scholars from across the country (including New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, Ohio, Nevada, Indiana, Idaho, Arkansas, Florida, California, Oregon, and, of course, Maine) to discuss and debate a wide range of issues in food law and policy.

The colloquium was loosely organized around three broad themes:

- (1) Flaws in federal approaches to food regulation, and proposed fixes;
- (2) Food sovereignty versus public health, safety, and welfare; and
- (3) Emerging food topics and government responses.

At the heart of the day-long discussion about the future of food rested a pivotal question: *Do we have what it takes to reinvent the U.S. food system?*

The colloquium became a forum for exploring the many ways in which people have recently challenged conventional thinking about U.S. food systems, both outside and inside the courthouse, along with the spectrum of hurdles—logistical, fiscal, and, of course, legal—they have faced. The exploration was fueled by thought-provoking questions from an audience comprised of members of the legal community, as well as farmers and community organizers on the “front lines” of various food movements.

In many respects, the colloquium and the essays that follow encourage us to not only think about where we are headed as a state, as a region, and as a nation with respect to the production, processing, distribution, and consumption of food, but also ask the natural next question: Do we have the right tools in the law and policy toolbox to get there?

The Maine Law Review is grateful for the opportunity to facilitate an exchange of ideas surrounding this important and relevant question. We thank University of Maine School of Law Professors Rita Heimes, Sarah Schindler, and Dave Owen for moderating the colloquium discussions, and the legal scholars for their thoughtful work in this emerging area of law.

1. The colloquium benefitted from the generous support of numerous local businesses, including the Rosemont Market & Bakery, Coffee by Design, East End Cupcakes, Kamasouptra, LiveME, Maine Farmland Trust, and Pierce Atwood, as well as the University of Maine School of Law and its Student Bar Association.